

# The Brethren Evangelist,

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## INEXCUSABLE IGNORANCE.

The *Outlook* of August 15, contains the following notice of a new book issued by the Lutheran Publication Society :

The Rev. Dr. Bergstresser's *Baptism and Feet-Washing* is a theological polemic directed against the Tunkers, a sect of German Baptists found mostly in Pennsylvania. They are extreme literalists, and usually as extremely ignorant, so that no literary argument would be likely to reach them. They meet in barns, build no meeting-houses, practice public confession of sins and general absolution from the congregation. Feet-washing takes place once a year at the longest, and is followed by the Communion; the former rite is held to be as sacramental as the latter. Dr. Bergstresser leaves them nothing to stand upon theologically, but they, in their literalism, will not be convinced. (Lutheran Publication Society, Philadelphia)

The statements in this notice remind us of the definition given to the word *crab*, by the forty members of the French Academy. It was this: "Crab—a small red fish which walks backward." When Cuvier was interrogated as to the correctness of the definition, he said: "Perfect, gentlemen, only I will make one small observation in natural history. The crab is *not* a fish, it is *not* red, and it does walk backward. With these exceptions your definition is admirable." The statements in the quotation from the *Outlook* are liable to more damaging exceptions than the Frenchman's definition of a crab. Make the exceptions and see what is left.

1. "Tunkers, a sect of German Baptists." Not right. The German Baptists are *one of three* sects of the Tunker family.

2. "Found mostly in Pennsylvania." Not correct. It is doubtful whether *one-tenth* of the Tunkers are found in Pennsylvania. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and other states have large numbers of them.

3. "They are extreme literalists." If strict adherence to *all* the teachings of the Gospel is literalism, then we plead guilty.

4. "Usually extremely ignorant." This is an unjust, false statement, without any foundation whatever. The Tunkers have a number of good schools and colleges, as many in proportion to

their membership as any other denomination. In intelligence they are not one whit behind any other people. An unusually large number of their children attend schools and colleges. They have mission stations in Europe, India and Asia Minor.

5. "They meet in barns." So they do in Pennsylvania to thresh their grain but not to hold public worship.

6. "They build no meeting houses." Not true. They own more than 1000 church edifices and are constantly adding to the number. Was there ever a paragraph written before with an equal number of misrepresentations? There is positively not one statement in the entire paragraph that is strictly true. A little more "literalism" on the part of the author would greatly improve matters.

7. "No literary argument would be likely to reach them." If the writer means by "literary argument," a literary effort to prove that the Bible does not mean what it says, that one is at liberty to choose what he wants to believe, that it matters not what a man believes so he is sincere, if this is what he means then he is correct. No argument, literary or any other, will convince the Tunkers that east is west, or that *baptizo* means to sprinkle, nor will any scholar of reputation be so convinced.

But enough of this. It is surprising that any one should venture to enlighten the public concerning a people of whom he is so amazingly ignorant. Especially is it unbecoming for such a one to designate the people of whom he writes as ignorant. There are a few things at least in which the Tunkers are better informed than the author whom we quote.

As to Dr. Bergstresser, we presume he is the same one with whom our Brother Bashor had a debate years ago on the subject of Feet Washing which resulted in an inglorious defeat for the Dr. In the paragraph quoted, we are told that the Dr. leaves the Tunkers nothing to stand upon. The Tunkers are not in need of anything to stand upon, that the Rev. Dr. can either give or take away. They stand now just where they did before the Dr. wrote his book, on the rock Christ Jesus with the Gospel as their only rule of faith and practice. No "literary" argument will move them from this foundation. Nor do the Tunkers entertain any fears. Christ declared the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it," and it is not

likely that Dr. Bergstresser is any more powerful. It is strange indeed that this book must be prefaced with the statement that it will be of no effect, owing to the "literalism" and "ignorance" of the people for whom it was written. Pity the Dr. did not know this before he wrote his book and thus save himself the useless effort. A book that needs such an introduction must of necessity be a very feeble effort. The statement is an evidence of its weakness, for its failure is anticipated. If the author wrote truth then he should have more faith in its triumph. We suppose however the reason his "literary arguments" will fail to "convince," is because they are not *convincing*. It is an effort of *error* against *truth* and a very feeble effort at that. The book will be reviewed in these columns in another issue.

## LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU ALSO.

So wrote the Apostle Paul to the Philippian Brethren: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" And what was the mind of Jesus? We need not go far for the answer. The Apostle himself declares it in this same connection in terms like the following: "Made himself of no reputation;" "took upon him the form of a servant;" "was made in the likeness of men;" "found in fashion as a man;" "he humbled himself;" "became obedient unto death." If these expressions mean anything they mean an entire and utter renunciation of *self*. Christ sought not his own. He was here on earth to do the will of him who sent him. He sought not his own glory, but the glory of his Father. If there was any one trait of character in the Lord Jesus, more conspicuous than another it was *unselfishness*. Not only the teachings of the Lord Jesus, but his life, his very presence was and is a continual condemnation of that self-seeking spirit which has played so large a part in the world's history ever since the day when Cain in cruel selfishness exclaimed, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

One of the very first requirements of one who would become a child of God, is the renunciation of self and an humble submission to the holy and righteous will of God. All the way through the Christian's pilgrimage, the life of Jesus should be his example, in this as in all other things. What a life it was! His unselfish devotion is not only beautiful, but without a parallel in history. He per-